

Essential notes for using the 1985 data

The original survey collected episode level data from three samples, but sadly the episode files for the smaller two samples, the phone-interview and the personal-interview samples, have been corrupted. Also, as the phone and personal interview samples only collected one diary per household, these are less comparable and allow fewer research possibilities than the mail-back sample. We have undertaken extensive work cleaning the episode files for the mail-back sample. Most published research using this data uses one of several summary files which add total time spent in a reduced version of the original survey codes. Our data are drawn from the full range of original codes. The larger original activity code base, the single sample, and the data cleaning we have performed have produced some differences between the estimates of certain activities users will get from this data set in comparison with other summary files in circulation. One difference is particularly pronounced. The original episode files include two codes, 481 (“time gap greater than 10 minutes”) and 579 (“end of diary marker”). In addition, we created a code of 0 during data cleaning for episodes which had no reported activity. We recorded all three of these codes as missing activity time. In other versions of this original survey data, these missing codes have been coded as personal care.

Users also should note that this survey collected diaries from all household members aged above 10. For many activities, this sample difference will make no difference – all households must undertake household care activities and all persons must undertake personal care. For some activities, though, especially such activities as some leisure pursuits and voluntary activity, this study may present higher estimates than the other surveys, as it is likely that one household member’s decision to undertake such an activity may influence other household members to undertake the same activity or be influenced by the decision of others to participate in such activities. Care should be taken in interpreting results, especially those which appear unusually high in this survey as compared with others. Similar options to those mentioned in the essential notes for using the 1975-76 data similarly apply here, such as using clustered errors (around the household identifier).

Most versions of this original dataset in circulation do not include the youth diaries. We have covered the whole of the mail-back sample in the AHTUS.